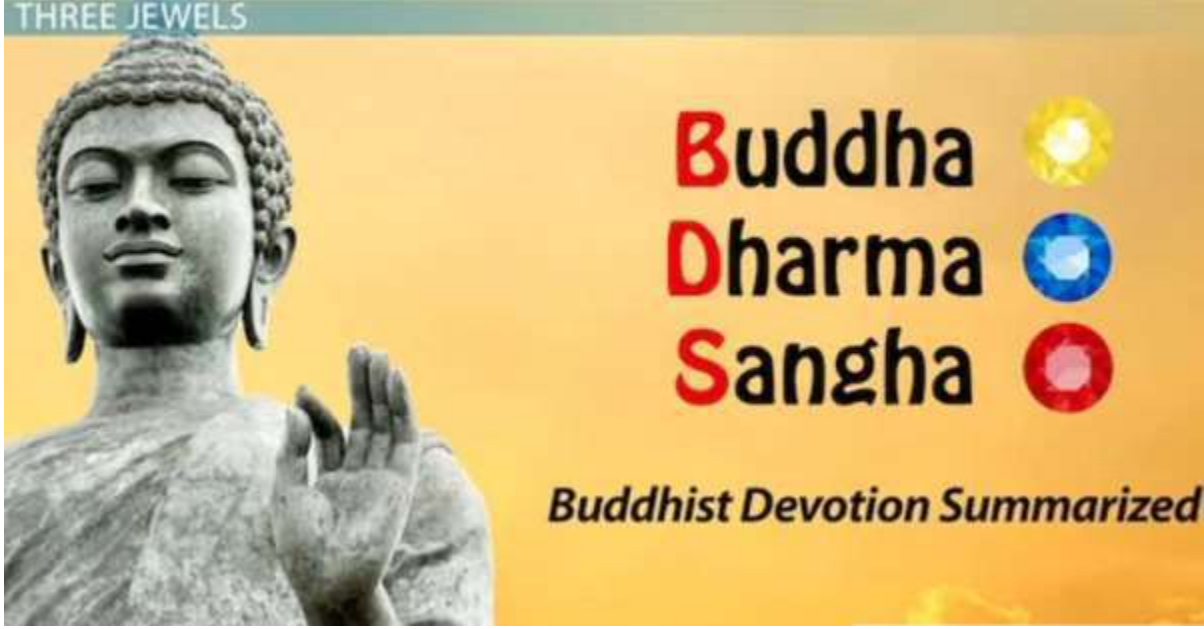
Management Lessons in Buddhist Literature

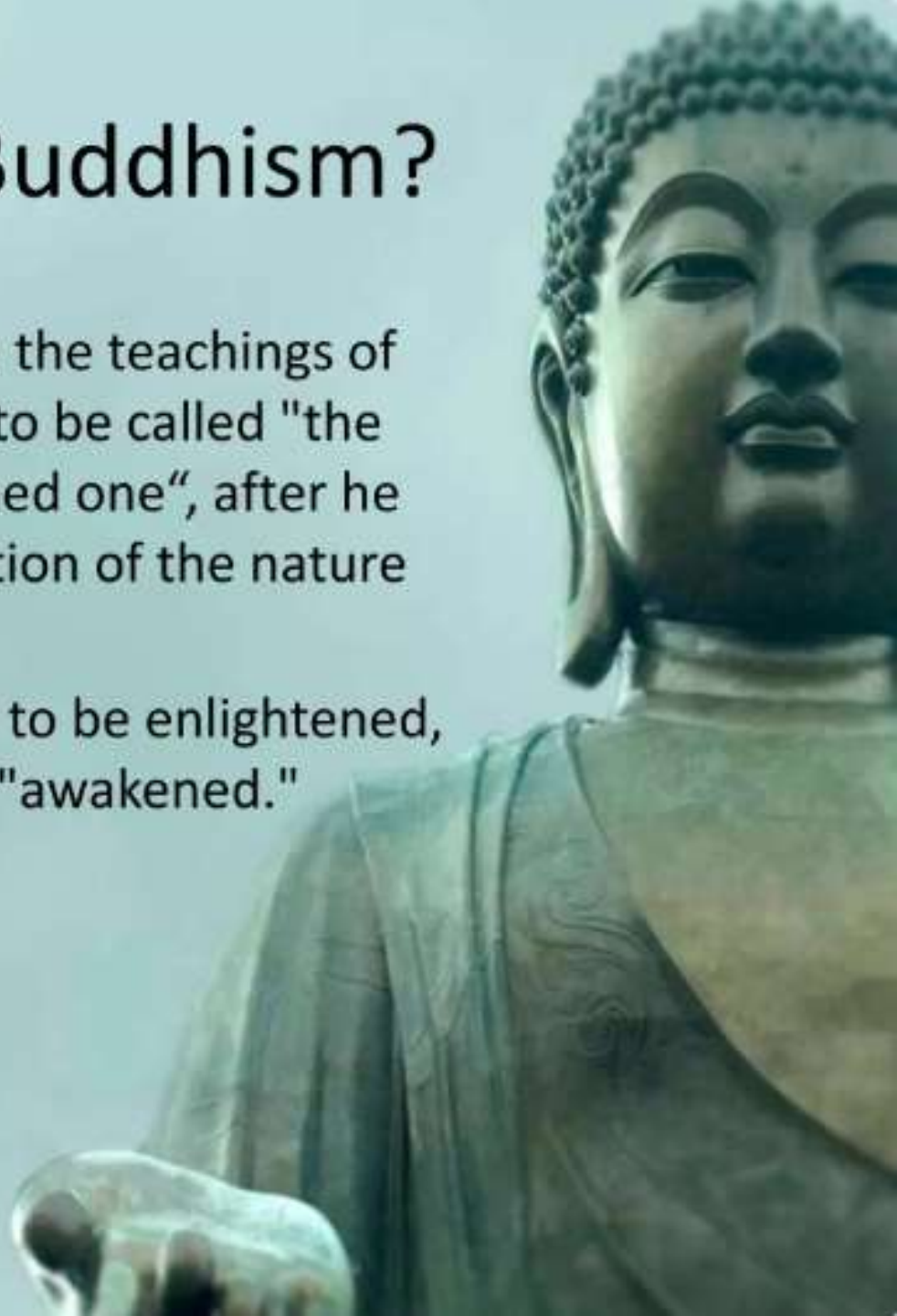
By Dr. Satyabrata Dash



1. **The Buddha is the guide.**
2. **The Dharma is the path.**
3. **The Sanghas are the teachers or companions along the way.**

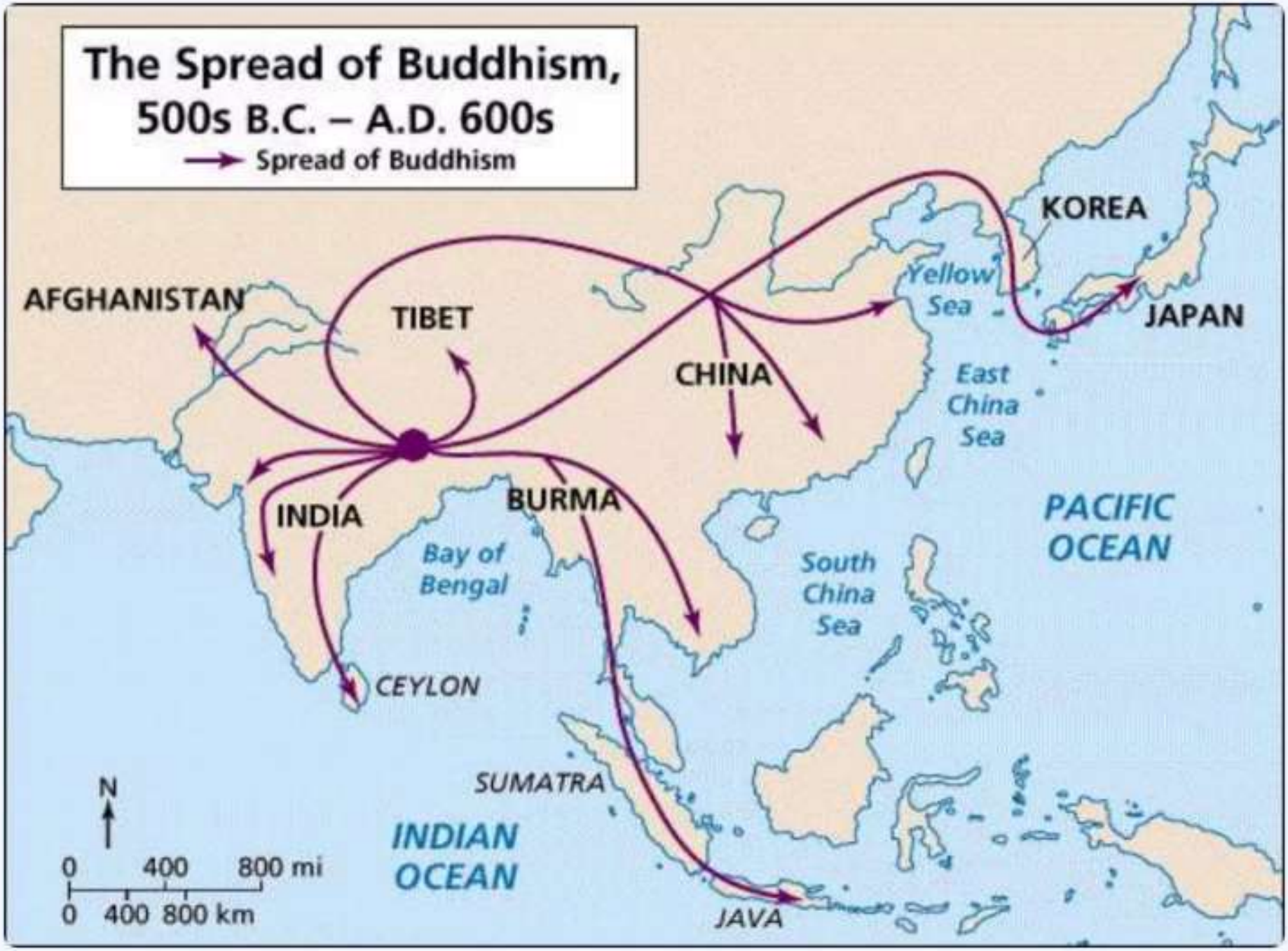
What is Buddhism?

- Buddhism is a religion based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama. He came to be called "the Buddha" which means "awakened one“, after he experienced a profound realization of the nature of life, death and existence.
- In English, the Buddha was said to be enlightened, although in Sanskrit it is bodhi, "awakened."



Origin of Buddhism

- Siddhartha Gautama was born into a royal family in Lumbini, now located in Nepal, in 563 BC.
- At 29, he realized that wealth and luxury did not guarantee happiness, so he explored the different teachings religions and philosophies, to find the key to human happiness.
- After six years of study and meditation he finally found 'the middle path' and was enlightened.
- After enlightenment, the Buddha spent the rest of his life teaching the principles of Buddhism — called the Dhamma, or Truth — until his death at the age of 80.


The Spread of Buddhism,
500s B.C. – A.D. 600s
Spread of Buddhism
KOREA
Yellow Sea
JAPAN
AFGHANISTAN
TIBET
CHINA
East China Sea
INDIA
BURMA
PACIFIC OCEAN
Bay of Bengal
South China Sea
CEYLON
SUMATRA
INDIAN OCEAN
JAVA
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0 400 800 mi
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Buddha's Four Noble Truths:

1. Life has inevetible suffering
2. There is a cause to our suffering
3. There is an end to suffering
4. The end to suffering is contained in the eight fold path

Our Wonderful World

Suffering:

- Life is suffering. Being born, growing old, sickness, and death all are suffering. Union with what we dislike is suffering, separation from what we desire is suffering. This is the essential nature of life.

Cause of Suffering:

- Desire is the cause of suffering. It is the force of desire that leads to rebirth and further suffering, accompanied by delight and passion.

Cessation of Suffering:

- The complete cessation of desires will end the suffering. Forsaking, relinquishing, and detaching of ourselves from desire and craving will automatically end the pain, pleasure, birth and rebirth.

The Path to end the Suffering:

- By practicing the noble eight-fold path, one can end the suffering. The eight fold path consist of; right belief, right thought or aim, right speech, right action, right livelihood or occupation, right effort or endeavor, right mindfulness, and right meditation.
- The Middle Path consists of living moderately and avoiding extremes of luxury and asceticism.
- The greatness of self-giving love and compassion towards all creatures that life contains merit exceeding the giving of offering to the gods.
- Man's true nature is divine and eternal, yet his individuality is subject to the change that affects all forms and is therefore transient, dissolving at liberation into Nirvana.
- Dharma (the path), Karma (cause and effect), reincarnation, Sangh (unity of seekers), and the passage on earth as an opportunity to end the cycle of birth and death.

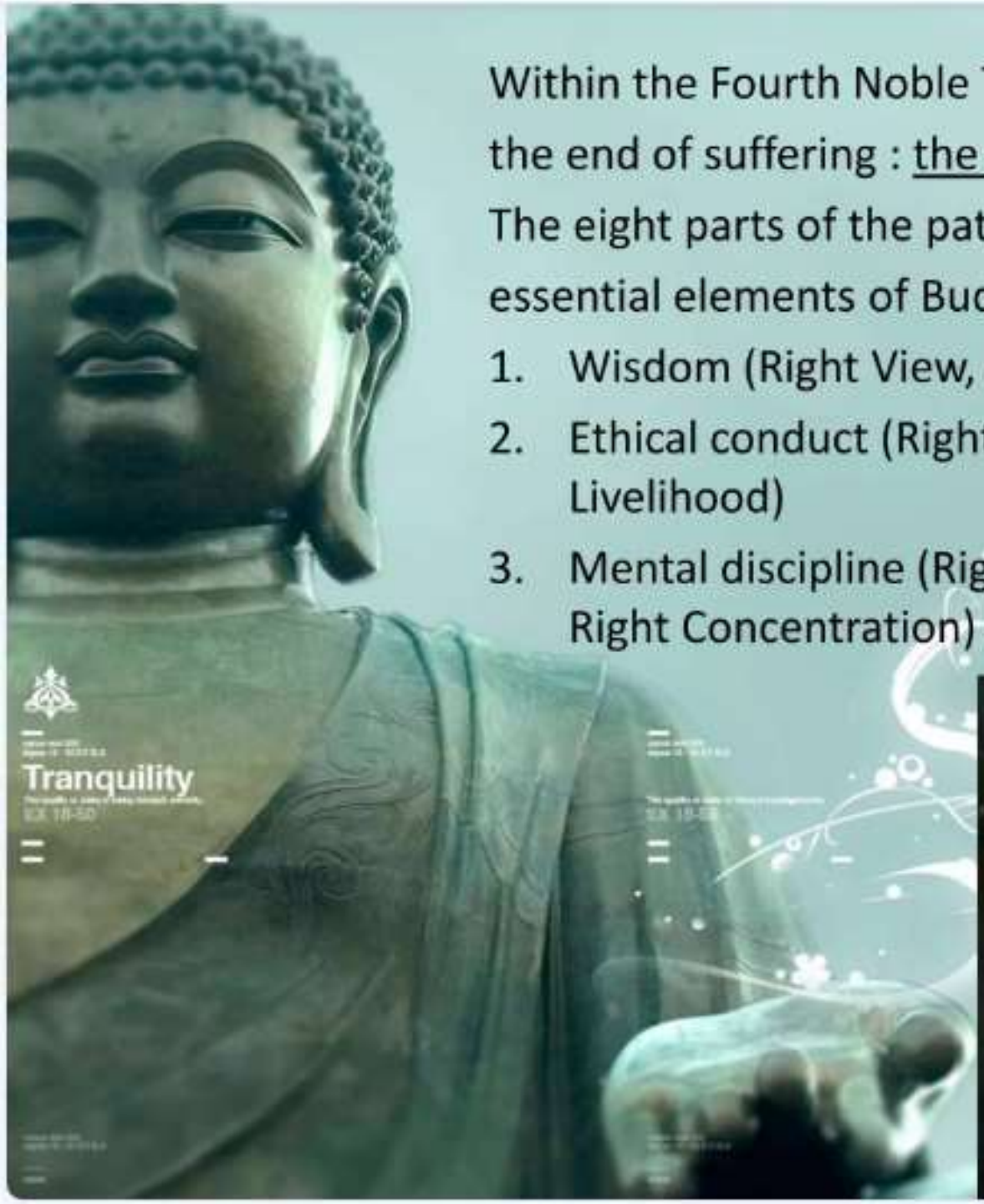
Religious Symbol:

- The Dharma-chakra or the Wheel of the Law is the most important symbol of Buddhism. The wheel signifies the round of births and deaths due to karma, which a person himself keeps in motion through his thirst (tanha) for life. It also symbolizes a constantly changing universe, and the impermanence of everything in the world.
- The hub of the wheel represents the three causes of pain: illwill, ignorance, and lust. The eight spokes of the wheel, represent the eightfold path. The wheel cannot survive without the spokes. Even so, dharma cannot be sustained without the practice of these eight virtues.

Within the Fourth Noble Truth is found the guide to the end of suffering : the Noble Eightfold Path.

The eight parts of the path are grouped into three essential elements of Buddhist practice-

1. Wisdom (Right View, Right Intension)
2. Ethical conduct (Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood)
3. Mental discipline (Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration)



The Noble Eightfold Path

These eight factors aim at promoting and perfecting the three essentials of Buddhist training and discipline, namely:

1. Wisdom (*Panna*),
2. Ethical Conduct (*Sila*),
3. Mental Discipline (*Samadhi*).

Right View

- **Buddhism:** Right view simply means to see and understand things as they really are.
- **Management**: In business this is about having a clear vision of what you're trying to achieve. A company that doesn't have a clear idea of where it's going is generally going nowhere. Also, having the right view of a market is the first stage to business success. It also means to see the world from the customer's point of view and clearly understand their needs and wants.

Right Intention

- **Buddhism:** Right intention is a commitment to ethical actions to produce a desired outcome.
- **Management**: Organizations with right intention focus on profits while fulfilling corporate social responsibility. They adhere to laws and regulations, corporate governance and follow ethical practices. Organizations with wrong intention achieve profits at the cost of social environment, adopt unethical and fraudulent practices, disregard corporate governance and breed unhealthy competition.

Right Speech

- **Buddhism:** Right speech involves telling the truth and speaking in a friendly, warm, and gentle way.

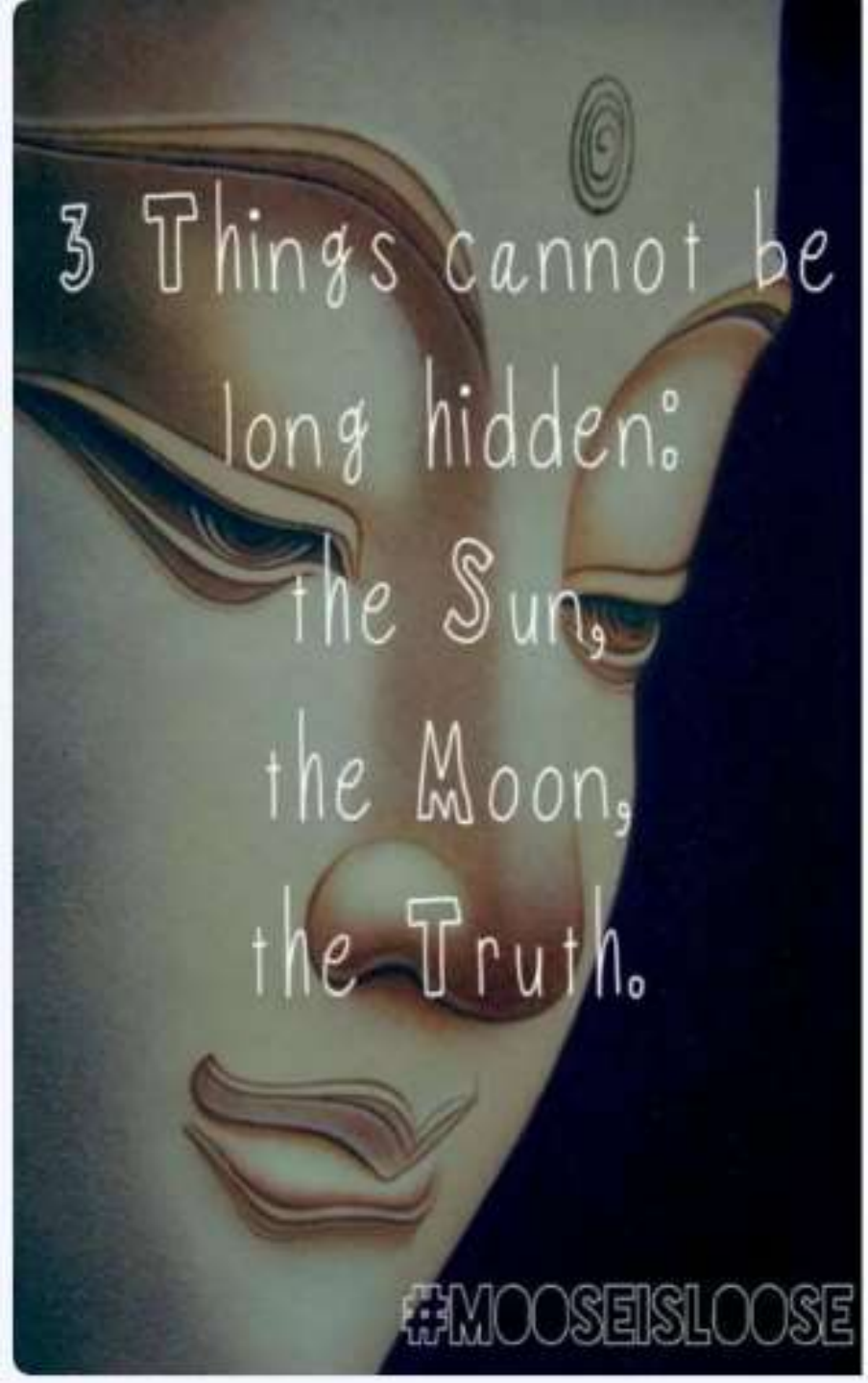
Management: Communication according to the principals of "right speech" is indeed the hallmark of management and the building of internal and external relationships.

"EACH OF YOU HAS BEEN GIVEN A SIMPLE, YET POWERFUL TOOL..."

Communication in a proper manner within the company would motivate the employees to contribute more. It is equally important to communicate truth to customers in a way that connects with their hearts and minds, and delivers positive reactions.

Right Action

- **Buddhism:** Right action refers to deeds that involve bodily actions. It means to respect the belongings of others, and act kindly, compassionately, and honestly.
- **Management**: Organizations focused on right action formulate and implement code of conduct and adhere to good corporate governance practices, the environment protection laws, financial rules and regulations and employee protection laws (e.g. anti-in discrimination, sexual harassment), clearly indicates the importance of right actions. And also the employees should be focused towards right action adheres to the code of conduct, works in best interest of the organization and protects the assets of the organization. And should not harass, bully and mistreat colleagues.



Right Livelihood

- **Buddhism:** Right livelihood means that one should earn one's living in a righteous way and that wealth should be gained legally and peacefully.
- **Management**: In business, the articles to be sold should be presented truthfully. There should be no deceptive advertising, misrepresentations of quality or quantity, or dis-honest maneuvers.

Right Effort

- **Buddhism:** In this factor, the practitioners should make a persisting effort to abandon all the wrong and harmful thoughts, words, and deeds.
- **Management:** Organizations are required to put their efforts towards legal activities and refrain from indulging in illegal activities. They are required to focus on social responsibility. Organizations are required to build constructive work cultures instead of destructive and aggressive work cultures.

Right Mindfulness

- **Buddhism**: Mindfulness is presence of mind, attentiveness or awareness. In the practice of right mindfulness the mind is trained to remain in the present, open, and alert, contemplating the present event.
- **Management:** The economic environment is such that organizations have to operate in an extremely dynamic scenario. They have to ride the changes while mitigating the risks.

Right Concentration

- **Buddhism:** Concentration is described as singular focus, meaning a state where all mental faculties are unified and directed onto one particular object.
- **Management:** Concentration brings about a capability to deliver accurate results. The organization which focuses on it's objective, attain it's goals accurately and with a great pace.

धन्यवाद